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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 24, 2005

## **Virginia Department of Aviation recently hosted annual Virginia Aviation Conference in Virginia Beach**

*Virginia Aviation Awards Banquet also held during 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference*

RICHMOND—The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Virginia Aviation Conference was recently held August 16-18, 2005 at the Ramada Plaza Resort Oceanfront in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The theme for this year's conference was "Aviation Tools."

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Aviation, Virginia Aviation Board, the Virginia Airport Operators Council and Virginia Aviation Business Association, the conference allows the aviation community to come together for informative discussions and meetings.

This meeting of airport managers, sponsors, consultants, government officials and others with an interest in aviation in Virginia offered breakout sessions on a number of timely topics and ran concurrently with the Virginia Aviation Board meeting. Some of the topics included a discussion panel of Economic Development Professionals, a breakout session relating to the Character of Your Airport, Airport Technology: What Are Users Looking For, and an FAA Seminar: Runway Signage. An exhibit hall featured a wide range of airport-related products and aviation companies promoting and displaying.

On Thursday evening, August 18<sup>th</sup>, there was a reception provided by host airport Norfolk International.

The annual Virginia Aviation Awards Banquet, which was held on Wednesday night August 17<sup>th</sup>, honored those who have made significant contributions to Virginia Aviation over the past year.

The 2005 Award for the Virginia Airport Manager of the Year was presented to Serena R. (Renny) Manuel. This award is given in recognition of her outstanding leadership, diligence, and fiscal achievements as Airport Manager of the Winchester Regional Airport. Renny was already working for the City of Winchester working in Airport Commission-related business

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when the Winchester Regional Airport Authority was established in 1987. She has been working for the airport ever since. After advancing through several interim positions, in February 1999 Renny was appointed Executive Director/Airport Manager. Her knowledge, skills, and foresight have enabled her to lead the Winchester Regional Airport through a successful year that included record fuel sales, a fourth consecutive year of operating “in the black,” refinements and improvements to the Winchester Regional Airport Security Plan and Procedures, a challenging proposed rezoning issue, a 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive EAA Fly-In as well as an ongoing Young Eagles Program.

Ronnie D. Vaughan was selected as the 2005 Virginia Aviation Person of the Year. This award has been given to him in recognition of his efforts in support of Virginia’s airport system and, especially, the promotion, preservation, and improvement of the William M. Tuck Airport in South Boston, Virginia. Ronnie Vaughan’s father was a crop duster in the 1950s and early 1960s. Ronnie inherited his Dad’s interest in flying and learned to fly off a 1200 foot grass strip on the family farm. He soloed at age 16. In 1996 he formed the William M. Tuck Airport Association to promote and preserve safe, efficient operations of the general aviation airport system (and specifically William M. Tuck Airport) to benefit the community and to advance public understanding and interest in the benefits and utilization of aviation through educational and charitable means. In 1997, Ronnie was appointed to the Airport Commission and has served as Chairman since. He has been associated with numerous important projects at the William M. Tuck Airport relating to the airport’s facilities as well as fostering good community relations through school programs and participation in community events.

In recognition of his contributions to aviation, including a 28-year career in airport management at Dulles International Airport, Keith W. Meurlin, has been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award. His dedication and commitment to the betterment of this vital component of Virginia’s air transportation system made him an important asset to Virginia aviation. Mr. Meurlin came to the Washington Airports following his active duty in the United States Air Force in 1977. He successively advanced through the organization and became Airport Manager in 1989. During his 17-year tenure as Airport Manager, Keith Meurlin directed operations, maintenance, and commercial activities at Dulles – which today employs nearly 17,000 people. During his tenure, the Airports Authority invested nearly \$1.5 Billion in expanding the airport facilities in the late 1990’s and is currently undertaking an additional \$3 billion dollar construction program to keep pace with current and future growth. Mr. Meurlin retired earlier this year and is currently serving in the Air Force Reserve, where he holds the rank of Major General; the highest rank a traditional reservist can achieve.

In recognition of his contributions to aviation and to the Commonwealth of Virginia through his co-founding of the charitable medical air transportation organization Angel Flight America, Ed Boyer, has also been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Boyer, who has been called the “Father” of charitable medical aviation because of his enormous contributions in developing charitable air transportation in America, was active on many fronts in 2004-05. A founding member of Angel Flight America, he is the incoming chairman of the board. In 2004, he oversaw the incorporation of Air Compassion America, a non-profit patient advocacy organization that helps locate and coordinate air ambulance services. He completed implementation of the Homeland Security Emergency Air Transportation System in 2005. He continues to serve on numerous boards such as the Combined Federal Campaign Committee and

Independent Charities of America. His extraordinary vision, compassion, and administrative ability has positively impacted the lives of 1000's of patients and has also positively impacted aviation in Virginia.

Three Virginia pilots who, this past year, have introduced the most young people to the joy of flight as a part of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Young Eagles Program are awarded the 2005 Virginia Top Eagle Awards. This year's "Top Eagle #1" is Richard Largent of Stephens City, Virginia, who flew 79 Young Eagles. "Top Eagle #2" is George Smith of Ashburn, Virginia, who flew 68 Young Eagles. And "Top Eagle #3" is Andy Ozols from Stafford, Virginia, who flew 55 Young Eagles.

The Virginia Department of Aviation is pleased to congratulate all of the 2005 Virginia Aviation Awards winners and thank them for their outstanding contributions to Virginia Aviation.

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